

Australian Principals Federation



Acting President's Message—Tina King

Being a school leader is one of the most rewarding yet challenging and taxing of roles. This was certainly the case last Friday afternoon, when announcements regarding the pending 'circuit breaker' lockdown were made.

In an attempt to meet the 3:30 pm dismissal time, school staff and leaders were working with great speed and haste to support students with the allocation of resources, equipment and materials. Turn-around times were short, workload pressures expedited and demands upon our leaders onerous.

Many of you spent the weekend giving due consideration to onsite supervision demands, whilst responding to the myriad of questions and demands from staff and parents. The work we do as leaders and under such extreme pressure and timelines is nothing short of extraordinary. As per my messaging that was distributed to members on the weekend, you are commended on leading with such acceleration, responsiveness and decisiveness.

Workload pressures and frustrations continue to plague Principals and lockdown announcements are additional to burdens already placed upon us through ill-timed and misjudged initiatives such as the Bridging the Digital Divide which has result in unintended consequences.

Many members have contacted me with expressed concerns in relation to matters relating to workload pressures and unrealistic demands in meeting timeframes and deadlines. The email below from one member encapsulates the level of frustration and anguish felt...

Is it just me, or are we in an era of micromanagement across our schools? As a Principal of many years it is disconcerting how managed we have become. We are rarely consulted on mandates and just told to deliver the data, information requested by due dates. We are no longer leaders of our schools, the person who knew what was needed for a particular cohort to improve. As an experienced Principal I am well tasked with leading my team of staff through improvement. I believe I have the skills and knowledge to track any changes implemented. I am able to decide what needs to be done and then monitor the situation. This high level of micromanagement from the top down, has devastating long term effects. Relationships, lowered morale, distrust, employee health & wellbeing, and most importantly productivity and progress is affected. Can we go back to trusting our Principals to have the best interests at heart for their schools?

We are only of good service and assistance to others if our personal health, wellbeing and mindset in the right state. The issue of workload and wellbeing has been and will continue to be, an ongoing topical item of conversation.

I urge you to keep perspective, be cognisant of your health and wellbeing and rest assured that we will continue to advocate and campaign on your behalf on the matters that have the most adverse impact upon our roles and capacity to effectively execute our duties.

T. King

EBA Update

The APF has entered into formal bargaining arrangements with established protocols restricting what can be published and discussed. The DE&T has outlined its management position in relation



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APF Website

<https://apf.net.au>

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class

to our log of claims and we have commenced the process of discussion and working through each clause.

Fundamental to our claims are many of the key items raised in this newsletter relating to workload, initiative announcements and remuneration. Members may view the APF log of claims through the member login on our website at www.apf.net.au



Bridging the Digital Divide –Growing concerns

This initiative, announced by Minister Merlino on December 17, 2020 is commended for its intent and purpose in addressing levels of student inequity relating to the provision of technological devices. Unfortunately, the implementation phase of the initiative has not been given appropriate consideration, resulting in direct negative impact upon schools from a financial and resource perspective.

The following matters of concern have been raised with DE&T following feedback from members:

- Communication to schools relating to the BDD announcement was disseminated via DE&T email bulletin on 17 December 2020, one day before the end of term. Whilst the communication provided links to FAQs and Factsheets, many school leaders did not attend to the information until resumption of duty in late January. This posed unrealistic time frames for implementation.
- In the communication received by schools in December 2020, it was stipulated that template letters were to be provided relating to transfer of ownership. To date schools are yet to receive this information.
- There has been little or no consultation with key bodies and stakeholders, such as the APF, to discuss and consider implementation strategies and mitigating levels of negative impact. Had opportunity been provided for consultation and discussion, many of the issues now confronting schools may have been addressed and favourable resolutions sought.



Undoubtedly, there have been unintended consequences because of the initiative. In summary, these include:

- Creation of shortfalls in fleets at the school level, therefore inability to run classroom programs requiring use of devices.
- Cost of replacement devices leaving schools with deficits. This is a direct result of 'contribution' rates by DE&T not directly equating to school replacement expenditure.
- Increased demands on technician times – this is particularly impacting on small schools where in some cases, visitations are on a fortnightly basis and for minimal hours.
- Disparity caused in schools who have implemented 1:1 program with lease option. In such circumstances, students who are not part of the program and were given a device during the remote phase would be 'gifted' a device, whilst others continue to pay. This undoubtedly creates a reversed equity issue. In some schools, parents are ringing to complain about the created inequity.
- Complications arising with devices leased by School Councils and now having to be given to students. School Councils have entered into such contracts in good faith and via contractual arrangements. Leasing companies are imposing early exit fees and in some cases, these fees are extremely inflated.

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Tooronga Village,
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Tel: 0412 584 002

***Thank you for
advocating for
the APF—our
membership
continues to
grow.***

***I am available to
assist you
Monday to
Friday.***



Gemma Naylor
APF Executive
Officer

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Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

*Forms can be
completed on-line.*

Where such circumstances exist, schools need to pay penalty for the early exit fee in addition to replacement of the device. The DE&T subsidy results in unfair shortfalls and causes budgetary difficulties. Due to the lateness of this advice, school indicative budgets (created in November) have not taken into consideration any shortfalls.

If you continue to face challenges with the implementation of the initiative, you are urged to seek further support via email at learning.from.home.technology@education.vic.gov.au



Tutoring Initiative Update

Many schools have completed the onboarding phase, having already recruited and appointed individuals to the tutoring role. As per DE&T information, tutors must be employed and working with identified students by Friday 26 March.

New advice is also available in relation to assessment of student learning. There is an expectation that schools will use a standardised assessment tool to measure student growth. The standardised assessment tool must be administered at the start and conclusion of the program.

Schools have opportunity to continue using standardised assessment tools which form part of their existing assessment schedule. There is no mandate to use a particular tool with extensive information available in PAL [assessment of student learning](#).



Acting Federal President's Report -Chris Chant

Across the country we have returned to school and made sure the start to the school year for the students, staff and communities in which we work has been as smooth and as organised as possible. The efforts made by your teams, administration and your own herculean performances need to be acknowledged and recognised in so many different ways, but will they?

Much of what we do is the role of the Principal, it is what we signed up for, but a great deal of our leadership efforts are above and beyond the role

description, what is understood by the wider community and what is recognised by those who set the agendas and policies within in which we spend countless hours working.

For us Victorians, last Friday gave us a perfect example of the challenging workload issue and the continually building levels of community and government expectation. Schools continually step up in times of crisis and our school leaders are often at the forefront of the responses to these major devastating events.

The COVID pandemic has created numerous and varied hurdles for our school leaders to scramble over, under or around!

The Premier commenced his address at 1.45pm last Friday and we were given some Department of Education guidelines at 3.20pm. Students are dismissed at my school at 3.30pm.

Yes, we have been in this space before and a lockdown of the current magnitude is something we, as metropolitan principal's, have been involved with. Our schools have managed these challenges successfully before and we have collectively engaged with our communities and worked through their concerns and related expectations related to COVID.

For our schools to react so quickly, set up the learning activities, manage the device allocation (which is another issue all on its own), manage the onsite learning provision, negotiate with staff about the work from home situation and make sure the vulnerable and 'at risk' students were supported this coming week is an outstanding effort.

Teams of teachers, office staff and school leaders all combined to make sure that our schools were ready to start this week COVID lockdown ready. For many schools this was achieved well after the working day was supposed to end on Friday night and across the weekend.

Being agile, responsive, supportive, professional and solution focused is how we operate as

BIFF THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Try BIFF as a guideline for tough conversations and e-mails: **B**rief, **I**nformative, **F**riendly, and **F**irm. Try writing down your key message and even rehearsing it before a tense encounter. Use BIFF responses to aggressive e-mails. Focus on what you can control. No matter how well you prepare, you cannot manipulate, control or direct others' responses. What you can do is model what you want to see from others. Respond to yelling with a calm, quiet voice; recognise and name another person's strong emotions; be aware of your own body language and be sensitive to circumstances in colleagues' and students' personal lives that may be affecting their behaviour. Keep in mind that the person on the other side of the conversation has a point, a plan and a purpose, no matter how different it is from yours.

"Leading with Grace through Difficult Conversations" by Jessica Cabeen in *Principal Leadership*, December 2020

Quote
from Hippocampus,
an email publication of
Principal's Digest

Principal's, school leaders and community leaders.

My thanks to each of you and please be assured that your contribution and ability to step up and respond to these constant demands is why we are such important elements to the whole response to COVID across the country – they just haven't told us yet!

Stay connected with your colleagues, access the support services if you need them, make sure your own wellbeing is a priority and we will get through this - however long it takes.

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to raise any issues.

Chris Chant. Caulfield Junior College, 9509 6872



Support for members

We are here to support and offer advice to all members at any time. If you are concerned about a colleague, please let us know.

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Ring us direct

Staged implementation of the Victorian Aspiring Principal Assessment (VAPA)

The Department of Education and Training has announced the Victorian Aspiring Principal Assessment (the VAPA) will become a requirement for first-time principal appointments from 1 January 2022.

The VAPA has been developed by the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership (Bastow), in partnership with the University of Melbourne and Genos International. Bastow consulted with peak bodies and principal associations to ensure the VAPA is accessible, equitable and designed to meet the Victorian education system's demand for high-quality principals.

The VAPA evaluates an aspiring principal's professional practice and emotionally intelligent leadership competencies using assessment instruments aligned with the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (AITSL, 2014). It recognises the strengths, potential and expertise of educators within Victorian schools.

From 2021, the VAPA will be implemented as a requirement through two stages:

Stage 1 - For principal roles advertised from 1 August 2021, aspiring principals will be required to have commenced the VAPA before being appointed to a principal role.

Stage 2 - For principal roles advertised from 1 January 2022, aspiring principals must have completed the VAPA, and be provided with a statement of readiness, before being appointed to a principal role.

Substantive principals are not required to complete the VAPA. The Secretary may also approve an exemption in any other circumstance.

Participants can complete the VAPA in a minimum of five weeks and it is fully subsidised for Victorian government school participants.

For more information, visit the VAPA [webpage](#) on the Bastow website or PAL [Recruitment in Schools](#)

FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AVAILABLE

For more than 16 years, Women & Leadership Australia (WLA) has been supporting female leaders across all sectors and industries. Through our Industry Partnership Framework, we work with associations and professional bodies in creating greater awareness and action around gender equity. Through their support, associations across the country are helping to create meaningful opportunities for their industries' female leaders. For more information, please visit <https://www.wla.edu.au/industrypartnerships.html>

Funding is available through Women & Leadership Australia to support the development of female leaders across Australia's Education industry. The initiative is providing women with

COVID-19 Advice

Nurture adaptive character traits. Those who survive and thrive in emergency situations show playfulness, curiosity, flexibility, humour, empathy and intuition.

Be gentle with yourself. Of course this is hard. The world is struggling with a disaster and you are not losing your mind because you are grouchy or forgetting things. How else could it be?

Be gentle with others. They are also living and working during the pandemic. Assume good will and best effort whenever you can. Be strong. Finally, be safe. The science is advancing and we are learning new things about the novel coronavirus all the time.

"Practicing School Psychology During a Pandemic: Lessons from Emergency Management" by Brendan Hickey in *Communiqué*, January/February 2021

Quote

from Hippocampus,
an email publication of
Principal's Digest

grants of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 to enable participation in one of three leadership development courses designed for emerging through to senior leaders. The scholarship funding must be allocated by the end of March 2021.

Expressions of Interest

Find out more and register your interest by completing the Expression of Interest form prior to 19th March: <https://www.wla.edu.au/education.html>



Lessons from Leadership—APF Councillor

In 2018, I was privileged to attend the Vice Chancellor's Principal's Dinner at Melbourne University. Vice Chancellor, Professor Glyn Davis was retiring and he provided his 'Lesson's from Leadership'

At the beginning of this year, using snippets of Professor Davis lessons, I constructed my own lessons for my leadership team, the middle leaders enjoyed the discussion that took place:

Keep your eye on the main game - don't compromise your (or our) values, don't settle for the status quo.

It's never about you - it ain't personal, step back and remain focussed and resolute.

Being part of the place is what counts - you have a brief dazzling moment to make a contribution, make it better, leave it better.

Gossip is undermining - don't get involved, it undermines our goals and your reputation, defend each other, take responsibility for the decisions we make as a team.

People are watching - everything you say and do. What kind of leader do you want to be?

Ombudsman's Report— Released 15th February 2021

Another disturbing report from the Office of the Ombudsman was released on the 15th February, which describes the dishonest and damaging behaviour of a Government School Principal. Whilst long, it makes compelling reading and I believe all members of the Principal Class should acquaint themselves with this report.

<https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/our-impact/investigation-reports/investigation-of-protected-disclosure-complaints-regarding-the-former-principal-of-a-victorian-public-school/#the-investigation>

Whilst we do not condone the actions and behaviour of this individual, it is important to note that such behaviour is certainly not endemic to the Principal class who on the whole are driven by strong moral purpose, integrity and honesty. We should not all be tarnished by the one brush.

Recommendations

The subject matter and findings of this investigation give rise to three recommendations pursuant to section 23(2A) of the Ombudsman Act.

At the commencement of the investigation, officers from the Victorian Ombudsman and the Department jointly briefed Victoria Police, and the Department has been in subsequent contact with Victoria Police. In light of the evidence set out in this report, the investigation make the following recommendations:

To the Department of Education and Training:

Recommendation 1

That the Department consider further auditing the Principal's financial activities when he was Principal at the School and decide whether to formally refer his conduct to Victoria Police.

The Department's response: Accepted.

Recommendation 2

That the Department introduce into principal recruitment material, guidance on making probative financial enquiries in relation to preferred principal candidates, to enable the Department to reasonably assure itself of the candidates' financial management capability.

The Department's response: Accepted.

Recommendation 3

That the Department introduce a process whereby school council members formally acknowledge, on an annual basis, their knowledge and awareness of the existence of the financial policies and procedures that apply to their roles and their awareness of the training and support available from the Department.

The Department's response: Accepted.

In response to a draft version of this report, the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training stated:

"I intend to accept these recommendations and confirm that the Department will take steps to implement them as soon as practicable."

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class

101 Things you need to know about being a principal, Mark McKelson



no 27—What On Earth Do We Do Now?

Blog

Writing this week is like having my wisdom tooth slowly chiselled out over two hours by a student dentist. I don't think any of us were thrilled at the thought of coming into work, wearing a mask and providing 'care' this week. I'm just grateful that my community has accepted that we weren't ready for this and have only been able to provide the minimum expectations. With the Federal Government doubling down on returning travellers, it's possible (likely) that we are going to experience more of these 'Circuit Breaker' lockdowns as the year progresses.

Like most of you, I was enjoying getting back into the flow of 'work' and planning out our year of Professional Learning, Community Events, Sport etc. Maybe I was being naive in hoping this wasn't going to happen again. Or that was just my way of dealing with the threat that is probably still going to be with us over the next couple of years. I hate to say it but you need to have a 'Plan B' for when this happens again.

Plan B

The commitment I have made to my community is if (when) this happens again, we will be ready to live video teach the next day. We are using these three days to set up our Google Classrooms, video conferencing, student access, modified specialist timetable etc. The challenge I gave my teachers Monday, was if this extends past Wednesday you are going live on Thursday. As disruptive as this is to the plan we had in place for term one, it might be extremely valuable going forward.

Our online timetable will look like this:

9am - Literacy

10am - Break

10:30 - Numeracy

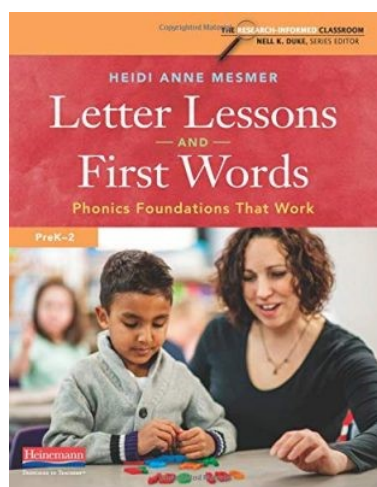
11:30 - Break

12:00 - Wellbeing, Inquiry Lessons

1:00 - Break

Afternoon - Specialist classes timetabled in during the week.

Professional Learning



What do we do here? For many of us the usual weekly PD fell by the wayside last year. This can't happen again. We have planned a phonics book study on Heidi Anne Mesmer's 'Letter Lessons and First Words' throughout first semester. With the first session planned for this week, I sent the reading home Friday with teachers and scheduled the first session in for Tuesday.

As disruptive as these lockdowns are going to be, I am taking a stronger approach with teacher development and growth this year. We plan these areas of growth because they are a weakness in our school, we owe it to the kids to keep pushing ahead.

APF Member, Mark McKelson, has been a member of the principal class at a number of schools across Victoria. He is currently Principal at Camberwell South PS. He is writing these "blogs" based on his experiences, in support of new or acting principal members of the APF, and has endless topics that he will write about which will appear in issues of the Vic Branch, APF Newsletter. From time to time Mark will write opinion pieces for all members. The opinions expressed are his own and do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the APF.

COVID-19

"Covid-19 has blown the doors off our schools and the walls off our classrooms. It has Zoomed educators into homes and parents into classrooms, providing the transparency that parents have long deserved. No longer are our practices hidden behind doors or buried in the pages of policy and collective bargaining agreements; they are now in full view on a screen... We are now guests in their homes. Parents are seeing the daily work students are doing, the way different classes are run, how educators talk to children, and their beliefs about what students can learn. This is a golden opportunity to address the deep systemic problems in the 'old normal' of our public schools."

"Parents Are Watching Like Never Before. 'Trust Us' Isn't Enough" by Sonja Brookins Santelises in *Education Week*, November 25, 2020

Quote
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an email publication of
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